

February 7, 2011

Dear Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Jim Kizer, and I am former Police Officer from Great Falls. I served on the police department for 10 years, and now serve as the director of the Great Falls Rescue Mission.

As a young member of law enforcement I was absolutely in favor of the death penalty and would have considered myself an avid supporter of the policy. During my time at the law enforcement academy, I had the opportunity to research the issue of deterrence and its effects on those who commit the most heinous of crimes. During this research, I discovered the facts that would eventually lead me to be against the death penalty. I have detailed some of the most compelling deterrence research below.

No credible study has found that the death penalty deters crime. A 2009 study published in the Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology concluded that "there is overwhelming consensus among America's top criminologists that the empirical research conducted on the deterrence question fails to support the threat or use of the death penalty."

In 2008, a scientific poll of police chiefs across the country found that almost 6 in 10 police chiefs agreed that the death penalty does little to prevent violent crimes because perpetrators rarely consider the consequences when engaged in violence.

Moreover, the death penalty was ranked last when the police chiefs were asked to name one area as "most important for reducing violent crime," with only 1% listing it as the best way to reduce violence. The police chiefs also ranked the death penalty as the least efficient use of taxpayers' money.

It should also be noted that regions with the most executions have the highest murder rates. Though the South has over 80% of the United States' executions, the region's murder rate is the highest in the nation.

It is for these reasons that I urge you to support Senate Bill 185 to replace the death penalty with life without the possibility of parole. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jim Kizer